

# UNAPOLOGETIC SELF-LOVE:

# RADICAL HEALING



AN ODE TO FOUR STRONG AND POWERFUL  
FEMALE STUDENTS OF COLOR WHO PLAYED  
AN ESSENTIAL ROLE IN HELPING MY MENTAL  
HEALTH, AND MADE ME BELIEVE IN  
SELF-COMPASSION AGAIN.

# THERE IS POWER IN NUMBERS

GOING TO SEE A MENTAL HEALTH THERAPIST FOR THE FIRST TIME CAN BE SCARY FOR ANYONE. THE PROCESS CAN BE ESPECIALLY DAUNTING FOR WOMEN. WOMEN HAVE ALWAYS BEEN TAUGHT TO SERVE AS THE CAREGIVER FOR OTHERS, THAT THEY HAVE FORGOTTEN TO CARE FOR THEMSELVES TOO.

GROUP THERAPY, ESPECIALLY ALL-FEMALE LED, HAS BECOME THE NEW ALTERNATIVE THAT MENTAL HEALTH SPECIALISTS SUGGEST WOMEN TAKE. GROUP THERAPY CAN REASSURE WOMEN THAT THEY CAN NURTURE THEMSELVES AS WELL AS OTHERS, AND THAT THEY ARE NOT ALONE IN THEIR STRUGGLE TO SEEK HELP.

GROUP THERAPIES FACILITATE BUILDING STRONG RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER WOMEN WHOSE ADVERSITIES ARE SIMILAR TO YOURS, AND CAN CREATE A SPACE WHERE ONE IS ABLE TO OPEN UP EMOTIONALLY, WITHOUT THE FEAR OF BEING JUDGED OR CRITICIZED, AND CREATING AN ENVIRONMENT WHERE WOMEN UPLIFT EACH OTHER AND HEAL.


IN THIS PROJECT, I EXPLORE THE POWER BEHIND FEMALE SOLIDARITY THROUGH THE EYES OF FIVE FEMALE COLLEGE STUDENTS OF COLOR WHO MET IN A MENTAL HEALTH GROUP THAT INTENDED TO HELP THEM PROCESS AND HEAL FROM EMOTIONAL ADVERSARIES EXPERIENCED DURING ONE'S TEENS YEARS.

DESPITE THE IN-PERSON SUPPORT GROUP CUTTING SHORT ONLY AFTER 2 WEEKS DUE TO COVID, WE DECIDED TO CONTINUE THE COUNSELING GROUP ON OUR OWN. WE HELD REGULAR WEEKLY FACETIME CALLS AND BECAME EACH OTHER'S THERAPISTS DURING A PANDEMIC.

WHAT STARTED OFF AS FIVE STRANGERS, ALL FROM A DIFFERENT 5C SCHOOL, SOON EVOLVED INTO A GENUINE SISTERHOOD.

HERE, I PHOTOGRAPHED EACH MEMBER THROUGH FACETIME TO SHOW THE POWER AND BEAUTY OF FEMALE SOLIDAIRTY AND COLLECTIVE HEALING. THEY EACH ALSO PHOTOGRAPHED THEMSELVES TO EXPLORE THE WAY THEY SEE THEMSELVES AND HOW HEALING LOOKS TO THEM. THE SELF-PORTRAITSHAVE A SHINY, PLASTIC-LIKE EDIT COVER, TO REPRESENT THE METAPHORICAL BARRIER THAT WE ALL HAD TO BREAK DOWN THE MOMENT WE DECIDED TO JOIN THE GROUP THERAPY ON CAMPUS.

MEMBERS WERE ASKED TO WEAR WHATEVER CLOTHING THEY FELT EMPOWERED IN. THE REST IS HISTORY.



"WITH EACH NEW BREATH,  
I INHALE STRENGTH AND  
EXHALE FEAR"

"I AM RECLAIMING  
EVERY INCH OF  
MYSELF, MOMENT, BY  
MOMENT."

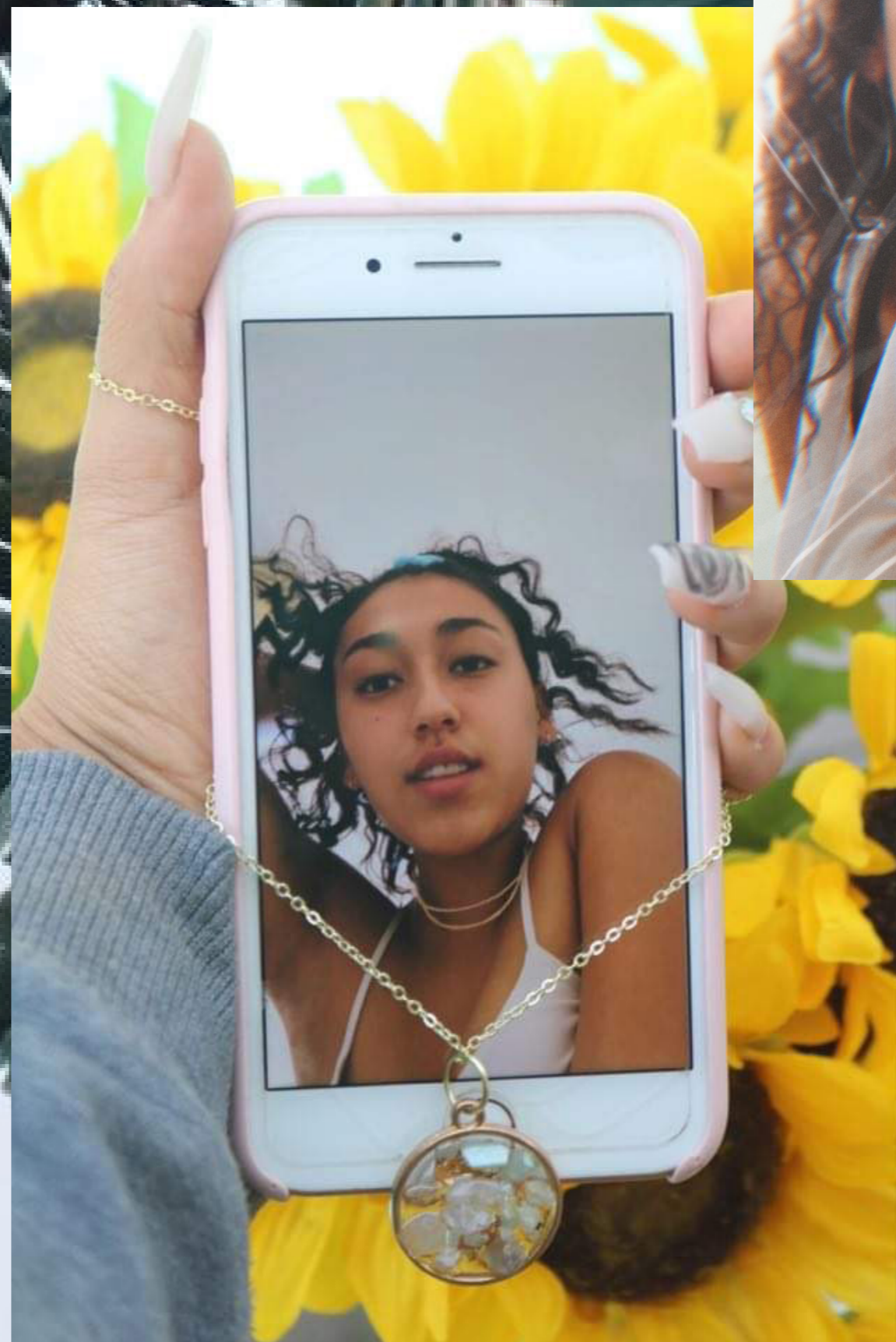
"ALL I NEED  
IS WITHIN ME  
NOW"

"HEALING IS THE PROCESS. A PROCESS THAT INVOLVES INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL CONTEXTS, PEOPLE, AND INFLUENCES.

HEALING RIGHT NOW IS A JOURNEY WHERE I GET TO JOURNAL AND JUST REALLY BE WITH MYSELF IN RELATION TO OTHERS.

HEALING IS DIFFICULT BUT IT'S BEAUTIFUL. HEALING FEELS LIKE THE PROCESS OF GLASS TURNING INTO SEA GLASS. ONCE THE WAVES CRASH ON IT, IT BECOMES SMOOTH.

HEALING IS WHY I AM LIVING AND AM INSPIRED TO HELP OTHERS. THESE GIRLS, THEY HAVE BECOME MY SISTERS. WHEN I AM FEELING SAD AND DON'T FEEL LIKE TALKING TO ANYONE, JUST KNOWING THEY ARE THERE."





“HEALING IS NONLINEAR”

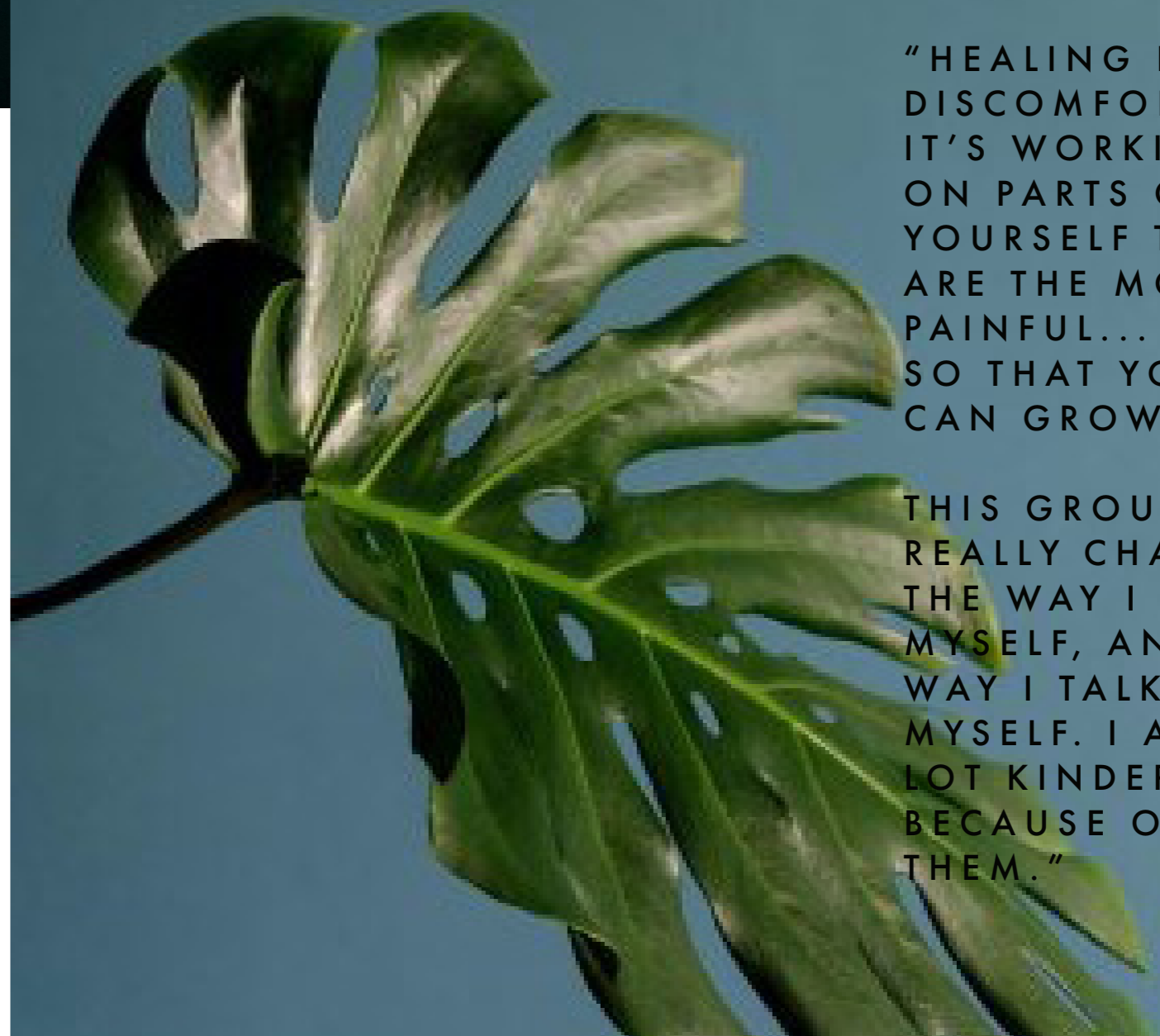
HEALING IS TRANSFORMATION

HEALING IS GROWTH

“HEALING IS FEELING ALL THE THINGS YOU DON’T WANT TO FEEL, SO THAT YOU CAN PROCESS THEM...AND GET TO THE OTHER SIDE OF YOUR HEALING JOURNEY.”



JAZMIN



“HEALING IS DISCOMFORT, IT’S WORKING ON PARTS OF YOURSELF THAT ARE THE MOST PAINFUL... SO THAT YOU CAN GROW.

THIS GROUP REALLY CHANGED THE WAY I SEE MYSELF, AND THE WAY I TALK TO MYSELF. I AM A LOT KINDER BECAUSE OF THEM.”



# JOSCELYN

“BECAUSE HEALING IS HARD, DOING IT IN COMMUNITY MAKES THE DIFFICULT WORK EASIER. WHEN I DON’T WANT TO HEAL ANYMORE -- WHEN THE PAIN BECOMES TOO STRONG -- MY COMMUNITY REMINDS ME THAT I AM STRONGER THAN THE PAIN & ENCOURAGES ME TO KEEP PROGRESSING.”

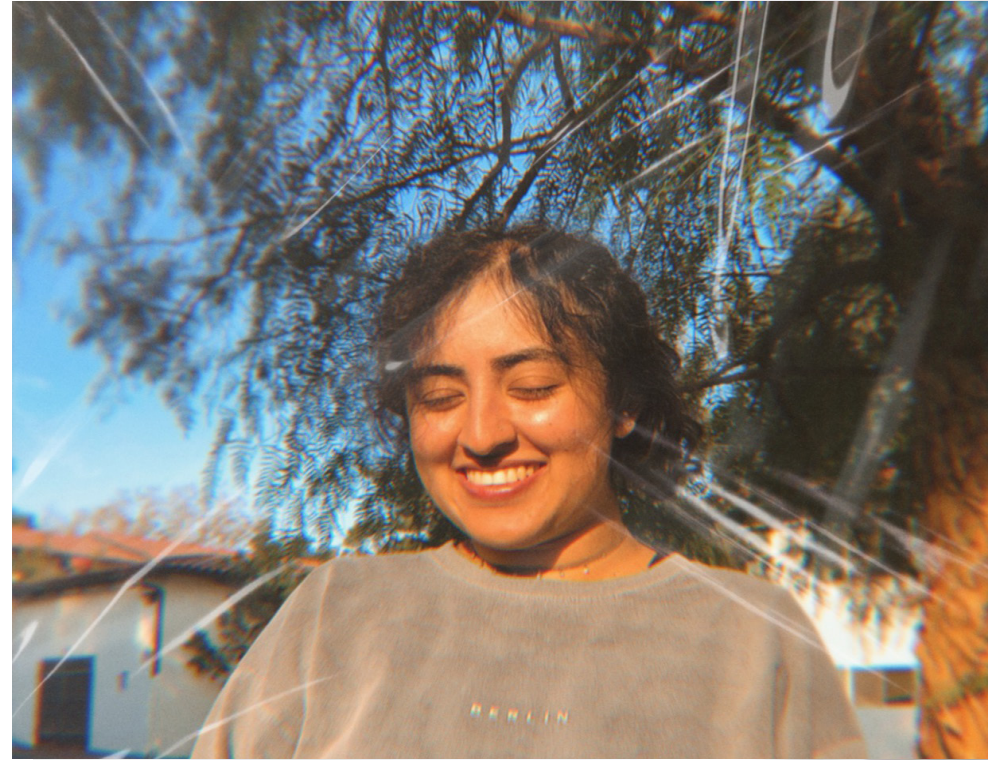


“HEALING IS INTERNAL & COMMUNAL. IT’S THE PROCESS OF DIVING DEEP INTO ONESELF AND IDENTIFYING AREAS OF PAIN AND HURT. THEN, APPLYING LOVE AND COMFORT TO THOSE AREAS THAT REALLY NEED IT.”



# MARYAM

"I WAS SCARED TO DO THIS ON MY OWN. HAVING A GROUP TO DO IT WITH, GAVE ME STRENGTH THAT I DIDN'T KNOW I HAD."



"HEALING IS ACCEPTING YOUR PAST IN ORDER TO MOVE FORWARD. "

"WHAT HELPED YOU SURVIVE IN TIME OF DANGER MAY BE PREVENTING YOU FROM LIVING YOUR LIFE NOW THAT THE DANGER IS GONE. HEALING IS A PROCESS OF CONSTANTLY REMINDING YOURSELF THAT YOU ARE SAFE, YOU ARE LOVED, YOU ARE FREE TO LIVE YOUR LIFE. "

# DIANA

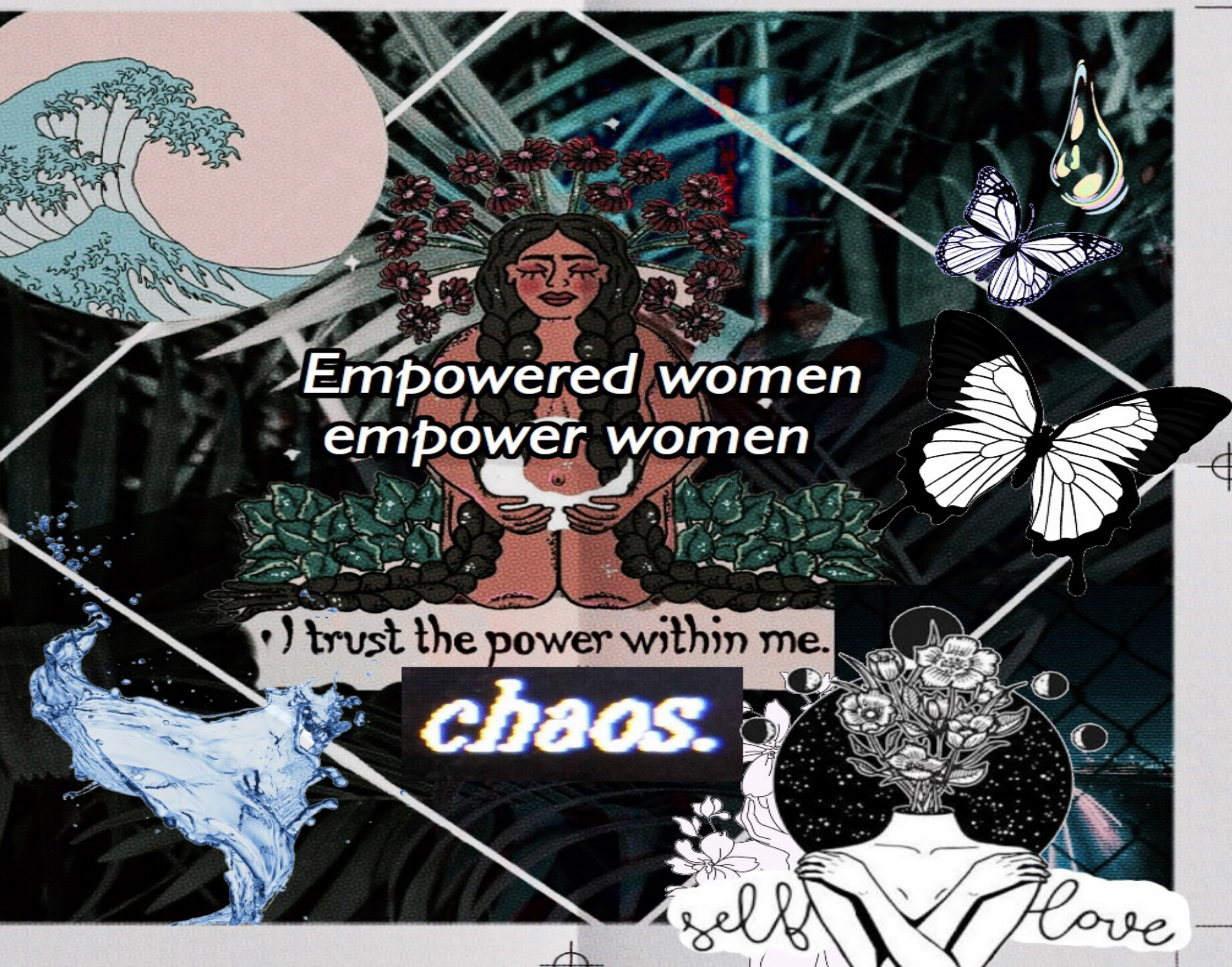


"HEALING IS NOT AN END-GOAL, IT IS A JOURNEY. IT IS A COMPLICATED ONE. BUT HEALING IS ALSO FREEDOM AND LIBERATION."

"HEALING IS LOVE. ITS SELF-COMPASSION. IT IS LOOKING INTO THE DARKER PARTS OF YOURSELF THAT YOU WERE TRYING TO AVOID, BUT RECOGNIZING THAT NO ONE IS PERFECT. HEALING IS BEING PATIENT. IT IS LIVING IN THE PRESENT, LIVING LIFE AS IT IS, AND NOT REGRETTING ANYTHING."

"HEALING IS ME."





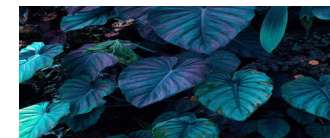
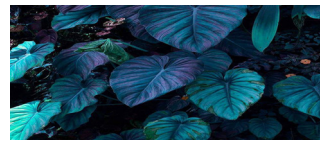
**Empowered women  
empower women**

I trust the power within me.

**chaos.**

self love

ARTPIECE SHOWS A COLLAGE OF DIFFERENT ITEMS THAT REPRESENT  
OUR DIFFERENT INTERPRETATIONS OF HEALING.  
\*PHYSICAL ZINE HAS TEXTURED PAPER THAT WILL LET'S PEOPLE FEEL THE  
INTERPRETATIONS



# Empowered Chingonas

"THIS GROUP MAKES ME FEEL SEEN AND ALSO IS LOVE. WE ARE REALLY SUPPORTIVE, SELF-EMPOWERING, GROWING TOGETHER EVERY DAY."

- GROUP MOTTO

